**ABSTRACT**

A figurative fantasy function presented in the article is meant to provide a link between language and imagination by sparing consciousness copresence. The article reflects the scholars' controversy concerning the determination of a key function of language. A communicative function of language is replaced by an adaptive one with ever increasing frequency, and language capacity is considered as a biological property of a living organism. The adaptive function of language implies the modification of the behavior of communicants such that the reality provides them with the best conditions for interaction. A communicant modifies their speech behavior, enhancing their general adaptational capacity in the surrounding. Thus, linguistic signs perform the function of orienting toward a more effective type of interpersonal interaction. The method of analytical reconstruction made it possible to obtain a systematic understanding of verbal and cogitative processes and conceptualization of semantic experience through the prism of understanding the functions of language.


---

**RESUMO**

Uma função de fantasia figurativa apresentada no artigo destina-se a fornecer uma ligação entre linguagem e imaginação, poupando a copresença da consciência. O artigo reflete a controvérsia dos estudiosos quanto à determinação de uma função-chave da linguagem. Uma função comunicativa da linguagem é substituída por uma adaptativa com frequência cada vez maior, e a capacidade linguística é considerada como uma propriedade biológica de um organismo vivo. A função adaptativa da linguagem implica a modificação do comportamento dos comunicantes de tal forma que a realidade lhes forneça as melhores condições de interação. Um comunicado modifica seu comportamento de fala, aumentando sua capacidade de adaptação geral no entorno. Assim, os sinais lingüísticos exercem a função de orientar para um tipo mais eficaz de interação interpessoal. O método de reconstrução analítica possibilitou a obtenção de uma compreensão sistemática dos processos verbais e cogitativos e a conceituação da experiência semântica através do prisma de compreender as funções da linguagem.


---

**Referências-chave**

Svetlana A. Pesina
Lyalya G. Yusupova
Lyubov V. Pavlova
Aleksandra A. Osipova
Elena N. Derevskova

DOI: https://doi.org/10.24115/S2446-622020217Extra-A787p.148-154
INTRODUCTION

Language as a fundamental to the development of human culture is an amazingly subtle and perfect instrument of communication, an unsurpassed means of forming thoughts and communicating them to other generations. Dictionaries define up to ten meanings of the word “language”: the main meaning is a system of verbal signs used by people in the process of communication (natural, artificial, dead, unwritten languages, etc.). In a metaphorical or semiotic sense, language is any system of signs that serves to convey a message (traffic light, drumbeat, handclasp, body language, etc.). Some scholars pay attention to the two-sided being of language, as an association of thought with sound (E. Benveniste, V. Doroshevsky, etc.), other scholars ignore the role of sound. So, for B. de Courtenay and F. de Saussure, language is a mental essence, on the one hand, and formal, on the other hand.

Sound is something extraneous, used for convenience, which can be replaced by another material substrate, such as, writing. Languages re-create the world by re-presenting it, ordering it according to their own intrinsic conceptual categories. W. Humboldt, as is well known, believed that the true definition of language can only be mental: language is a constantly renewed work of spirit aimed at making an articulatory sound suitable for expressing thought. Language is not a product of activity (ergon), but the very activity (energia). However, despite the fact that such an interpretation is widely recognized by linguists, language is often studied as a finished product, for example, from the standpoint of an innate Universal Grammar. As a cultural possession, language is a form of social cognition, for it is language that transforms thinking from an internal process of an individual into social acts. For a person, language turns out to be a final classifier of the objective reality and, as it were, to railroad, on which the train of human consciousness runs.

At the same time, language imposes its own classification system: if we have learned from our childhood that the fingers are parts at the end of hands, and the toes – parts of feet (finger - toe), then by maturity we are confirmed that this division within the category “human body” is true. Language can be the cause of misconceptions and misunderstandings, on the one hand, and actively contribute to the development of progress, on the other hand (for example, the “economic miracle” of Japan is explained by some linguists also from the standpoint of the peculiarities of the language). Nowadays, a pragmatic approach makes researchers see in language a tool with which people influence each other’s behavior, thereby changing the situation in the world around them in accordance with their intentions. In total, linguists distinguish about twenty-five language functions, the main of which are as follows:

**Table 1.** The Classification of Language Functions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language functions</th>
<th>Definitions of language functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicative</td>
<td>using language for communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemic / accumulative</td>
<td>forming new content knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward reality</td>
<td>representing by language of the world interpreted by consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive / gnoseological</td>
<td>using language as the means of thinking, world cognition, accumulation and transmission of knowledge to other people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informative</td>
<td>perceiving and transferring information (in metaphorical sense because thoughts are not communicated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominative</td>
<td>naming the objects and phenomena of reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axiological</td>
<td>evaluation (good / bad)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phatic</td>
<td>contact-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic</td>
<td>standing up for creative space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>denotative and representative</td>
<td>mental and linguistic reflection of the main objective information about an item or a phenomenon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expressive</td>
<td>expression of feelings, emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omdative</td>
<td>reality formation and control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological</td>
<td>using language to express ideological preferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metalinguistic</td>
<td>explanation of linguistic concepts by the means of the very language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voluntative (incentive, perlocutionary, appellative, directive)</td>
<td>addressee (s) impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classification/ categorization</td>
<td>referring an object or a phenomenon to corresponding group of objects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Search data.
Along with cognitive and gnoseological functions, some authors separately indicate to intellectual function that serves the need to highlight specific information, process it and built it in other information.

Metalinguistic function also involves checking the “channel of communication”, clarifying whether language is comprehensible, especially in a conversation with foreigners. In this case, they often resort to interpreting words and expressions (“Do you understand what I mean?”, “What are you getting at?”). This function can be identified by quotes and introductory clichés: “so to speak”, “as they say.” It is actively used in statements about the language itself, grammars, dictionaries, etc.

Poetic function is used primarily in poetic discourse where the process of perceiving measures, rhymes, alliteration, etc. plays an important role, and information is often of secondary importance. Moreover, even an incomprehensible poem tends to be enjoyed in form. More specific functions are also distinguished: magical or spell function, ethnocultural, interpretive or explanatory, deictic (indicative), regulatory or interactive (linguistic interaction of communicants, intended to exchanging communicative roles).

METHODS

The main research methods in the field of reconstruction of language functions are phenomenological observation and cognitive invariant analysis of lexical units. The structural-functional method makes it possible to identify structural linguistic elements via their speech variation and determine the functions of each of them within the system, thereby revealing the essence of the units under study. Modeling of verbal and cogitative and sign processes is carried out on the basis of introspection as an intuitive reproduction of scenarios of a sender and a recipient of the message.

HYPOTHESIS

In our opinion, it is possible to supplement the list of language functions with a generalizing invariant function. The point is that most of our everyday words are polysemantic words. Some of them have dozens or even hundreds of meanings and we retain them in our consciousness associatively within one structure. A polysemant develops a generalized core of content during the time, which allows a native speaker to effectively navigate the environment in a communicative time trouble, because sometimes one or more general (invariant) features are sufficient to “grasp” the contextual meaning (PESINA, ZIMAREVA, 2017; 2019).

For example, the polysemantic word head contains more than a hundred figurative meanings, most of which are metaphors. With time, a word can form a lexical invariant, the meaningful core of the entire lexeme: the most important top or beginning part of an object, often round. It solves important communication problems: it provides a quick access to the right metaphor, effective speech interaction, when an individual has a minimum of time to think about what has been said in the communicative time trouble, and a general identifying semantic component of utmost importance is sufficient) SOLONCHAK, PESINA, 2015). Another linguistic function, in our opinion, can be a figurative fantasy function which provides a link between language and imagination. Expressing the idea of things in words, it obviates the need for our copresence. In this paper we shall try to form the rationale for one of the most essential function of language – adaptive.

MAIN BODY

Currently, disputes about defining the most important function of language do not cease. Even the founder of logical positivism, G. Frege, believed that only cognitive and informative functions of language should be objectively considered since the main function of language is to represent what can be true or false (FREGE, 1997). It is difficult to dispute against the fact that the purpose of language is to be an instrument for the transfer of knowledge in acts of communication, to serve the expression of meanings in communication. It is possible to make it more precise: language, of course, is a
Cognitive linguistic aspects of the most important functions of language

necessary means of transferring information processed by consciousness. Language is used to create, store, retrieve information. At the same time, one can speak about the transfer of information only metaphorically, for it is literally impossible to do this.

However, the truth of this position was criticized by linguistic philosophers in the middle of the last century. They argue that the statement of facts is only one of the many tasks solved by language, and the meanings of linguistic units are manifested not in some abstract relations, but in their real use: the meaning of a word is its use in language on several occasions (WITTGENSTEIN, 1994). It is about the fact that meanings deflect their semantics depending on the context. Refracted contextual use can make the representation of truth being relative.

Since the beginning of 1970s, communicative and persuasive functions of language seem to be the most important. So, a set of measures aimed at increasing the effectiveness of linguistic manipulation is called persuasive communication. It is associated with an opinion of a communicator, which can be direct (expression of one’s own point of view), detached and indirect (concealment of one’s own point of view). The content of each of these positions is set by the purpose of the communicative manipulation. Each of these positions has certain possibilities for enhancing the effect of persuasion.

Today, there is an increasing attention to questions about how an individual perceives, interprets and conceptualizes reality. Consideration of the subjective factors in linguistic semantics, the principle of anthropomorphism in the study of linguistic phenomena, as well as the leading position of bio-cognitive science that the activity of linguistic consciousness is associated with the functioning of the entire human nervous system, necessitate giving a more precise definition into the basic functions of language. Human activity from the point of view of the biological theory of cognition assumes that self-organization in physical space is the basis of life. The traditional definition of linguistic function as communicative is increasingly being replaced by the idea that linguistic ability is considered as a biological property of a living organism (human). Due to the fact that this property arose and developed in the process of adaptational human activity, the fundamental function of language can be called adaptive.

Focusing on this function of language as the main one, bio-cognitive scientists believe that language can be used even if there is only one person with the language in the Universe, and in this case an adaptive behavior will take place. It follows that the communicative activity of an individual is only a part of human behavior in response to environmental challenges, therefore, modern linguistics must consider the biological nature and real properties of a human being.

The thesis about the fundamental adaptive function of language is quite correct, for it implies a fundamental impossibility of the conception of the essence of language in isolation from a person as a living system, the characteristic features of which are the principle of mutual causal relation in the “man – environment” system. In pursuit of any goal, man tries to achieve maximum effect in their adaptation to the actions of others, appreciating the compatibility of general and concrete strategies. The adaptive interaction of man with the world involves the modification of the behavior of their like so that the world that has changed as a result provides better conditions for adaptation to the environment. At the same time, man also modifies their own behavior, relying on the interpretation of the behavior of others, thereby strengthening their adaptational capacity. In the context of the adaptive function of language, a linguistic sign, being used in speech, and replacing some object, has the function of orienting the addressee of speech to a certain type of interaction with the replaced object in a situation. If to expand the term “surrounding reality”, then adaptation to it can include both the mastery of verbal signs and the communication itself.

The biological theory of knowledge as a theory of self-organizing systems proceeds from the fact that self-organization in physical space is the basis of life (LAKOFF, 1987; GIVON, 2002; KRAVCHENKO, 2004), and human linguistic activity is considered as certain structures of behavior in the cognitive field of interactions, which are orienting in nature and serve to perform the bio-cognitive function of adaptation of the organism to the environment and to subsequently control it. Within this interpretation...
it is also impossible to consider basic linguistic functions outside of connection with pragmatics, philosophy of language, psychology, biology and, more broadly, with cognitive science (by the way, representatives of this direction call for interdisciplinary research).

For example, understanding the predominant linguistic function is aligned with the goals of the perlocutionary function in pragmatics and the tasks of neuro-linguistic programming, etc., and this function acquires an umbrella character. However, the questions arise as to whether our verbal behavior is always adaptive and how to explain the communication of information using the theory of adaptation. How exactly is an adaptive behavior carried out, for example, the adaptive behavior of a student on an exam or a dispatcher at their place of work? The answer to these questions can be the assumption that their successful performance of the adaptive function will contribute to their recognition as good and knowledgeable representatives of these social groups.

Regarding the explanation of the very fact of information communication, according to H. Maturana, one has only to admit that the function of language is to orientate an orientated person in their own cognitive field, as it becomes obvious that there is no information transmission through language. Indeed, language does not convey information in a verbal shell as in a capsule. The choice of where to orient their cognitive area is made by the very orientated person as a result of an independent internal operation on their own internal state. The message is the springs of the choice, but the orientation it produces may not depend on what representations are contained in the message. “The listener creates information on their own, reducing uncertainty through interactions in their own cognitive domain. Consensus is obtained only due to cooperative influences, in which the resulting behavior of each of the organisms serves to maintain both of them” (Maturana, 1995).

An adaptive function and other key functions of the language are related to the issue of the optimal number of language units that are necessary and sufficient for successful communication. In fact, lots of human language is often portrayed as surprising. On the other hand, from the point of view of the manifestation of an adaptive function of language, a compact and scanty vocabulary would have an advantage, since there would be a “release of brain capacities for other purposes than memorizing words”, in addition, there would be “an accelerated vocabulary acquisition in childhood” (Carstairs-McCarty, 1999: 12). Conversely, these positions of bio-cognitive scientists seem controversial. Synonyms rather signalize the affluence of language, performing a number of communicatively significant functions – distinctive (ideographic), clarifying, stylistic and substitution (in certain contexts). The linguistic economy is not so much a smaller volume of lexical units as their optimal storage and interaction in the lexicon, as well as the efficient functioning of speech production mechanisms, implying assimilation and reproduction of meanings (Pesina, Timokhina, et al, 2020; Pesina, Churilina, et al, 2020; Nandon, et al, 2019). Wealth of vocabulary is a natural phenomenon due to cognitive function, because the more environmental factors “taken into account” by the body, the higher its adaptational capacity.

**SUMMARY**

Consideration of the subjective factors and the principle of anthropocentrism in the study of linguistic phenomena, as well as the leading position of bio-semantics that the activity of linguistic consciousness is associated with the functioning of the entire human nervous system necessitates clarifying the basic functions of language. In this context one of the basic functions of language can be an adaptive function. This does not mean that all aspects of consciousness are a consequence of adaptation, or that what consciousness is adapted to will necessarily be beneficial in the new conditions of evolution. Despite a number of advantages of the theory considered above, the traditional understanding of the basic function of language as a communicative one should in no way be swept aside as secondary: modern cognitive linguistics also describes mental (cognitive), gnostic, nominative and regulative functions of language as central).

In our opinion, the synthesis of these approaches is possible if we consider communication as an
activity enabled by sensory perception, with the intention of bringing another being to a conclusion based on interpretation. With this approach, modification of the behavior of communicants and their own adaptability become part of the communication process. Thus, the very concept of communication can be thought of as broader than the adaptive skills of an individual. Besides, language is definitely designed to connect consciousness with reality. This connection is carried out in the process of human interaction with the environment.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors confirm that the data do not contain any conflict of interests.

REFERENCES


1 Dr of Philology, Ural State Mining University, 30 Kuibyshev Str., Sverdlovsk region, 620144, Yekaterinburg, Russia. E-mail: spesina@bk.ru. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6036-026.

1 PhD, Ural State Mining University, 30 Kuibyshev Str., Sverdlovsk region, 620144, Yekaterinburg, Russia. E-mail: lyalyax@bk.ru. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3122-8596.

2 Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Nosov Magnitogorsk State Technical University, 38 Lenin Avenue, 455000, Chelyabinsk Region, Magnitogorsk, Russia. E-mail: pavlovaluba405@mail.ru. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4900-2632.

3 PhD, Nosov Magnitogorsk State Technical University, 38 Lenin Avenue, 455000, Chelyabinsk Region, Magnitogorsk, Russia. E-mail: osashenka@yandex.ru. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6062-3849.

4 PhD, Nosov Magnitogorsk State Technical University, 38 Lenin Avenue, 455000, Chelyabinsk Region, Magnitogorsk, Russia. E-mail: august1667@mail.ru. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1352-7533.

Received in: 2021-03-10
Approved in: 2021-04-26